

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 PHNOM 04131 030122 Z

73-62

ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 DODE-00 PRS-01 H-01 L-02 IO-03 RSR-01

/057 W

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R 011320 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1108

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 4131

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, CB

SUBJ: UPI ARTICLE CONDEMMING U. S. AIR STRIKES IN CAMBODIA

1. ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF THE STRAINED RELATIONS WHICH HAVE EXISTED BETWEEN THIS EMBASSY AND UPI STRINGER IN PHNOM PENH SYLVANA FOA HAS BEEN HER TENDENCY TO ATTRIBUTE TO OFFICIAL MISSION SOURCES STATEMENTS WHICH, IN THE CONTEXT SHE PLACES THEM, COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MADE BY A KNOWLEDGEABLE OFFICER. AN ARTICLE UNDER HER BYLINE AND A HONG KONG DATELINE IN THE APRIL 29 ISSUE OF THE STARS AND STRIPES AND PERHAPS OTHER NEWSPAPERS IS A PARTICULARLY EXAMPLE OF THIS PRACTICE IN THAT IT CITES A NUMBER OF STATEMENTS BY " U. S. EMBASSY," " AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE," " U. S. AIR FORCE," " WESTERN MILITARY," AND " INTERNATIONAL RELIEF" SOURCES TO SUPPORT AN UNJUSTIFIED, SENSATIONAL INDICTMENT OF U. S. AIR OPERATIONS IN CAMBODIA. SINCE THIS ARTICLE MAY BY SUCH MEANS ATTRACT UNDUE ATTENTION, WE WISH TO POINT OUT  
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PAGE 02 PHNOM 04131 030122 Z

SOME OF ITS MORE PROMINENT MISREPRESENTATIONS.

2. THE STATEMENT, WHICH MISS FOA ATTRIBUTES TO " U. S. EMBASSY SOURCES" THAT " DOCUMENTED EVIDENCE" OF INVOLVEMENT OF NORTH VIETNAMESE COMBAT TROOPS IN THE CURRENT OFFENSIVE IS LACKING IS TRUE. BECAUSE OF THE DEFENSIVE POSTURE OF FANK TROOPS, HOWEVER, EVIDENCE OF KHMER INSURGENT PARTICIPATION IN THE FORM OF CAPTURED DOCUMENTS AND MEN HAS IN MOST CASES ALSO BEEN LACKING. WE HAVE REPORTS FROM RELIABLE COMMANDERS OF VIETNAMESE SPOKEN ON FIELD RADIOS DURING ENEMY OPERATIONS AND SOMEWHAT LESS RELIABLE CLAIMS OF VIETNAMESE BODIES RECOVERED. IN THE PAST ( THE EXTENSIVE ENEMY OPERATION ON ROUTE 5 LAST FALL IS AN EXAMPLE) DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE OF VIETNAMESE PARTICIPATION IN WHAT WAS ORIGINALLY BELIEVED TO BE A PURELY KHMER ATTACK HAS BEEN UNCOVERED MANY WEEKS AFTER THE EVENT. FOR THESE REASONS NO KNOWLEDGEABLE MISSION OFFICER WOULD AT THIS JUNCTURE WISH TO INDICATE THAT VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS ARE NOT INVOLVED IN THE CURRENT OFFENSIVE. QUITE TO THE CONTRARY WE ARE CERTAIN THEY ARE INVOLVED, ONLY THE PRECISE EXTENT REMAINS TO BE DETERMINED.

3. THE FACT THAT MOST REPORT MOST VIETNAMESE TROOPS ACTUALLY BASED IN CAMBODIA ARE ENGAGED IN LOGISTICS OPERATIONS, WHICH MISS FOA SAID WAS REVEALED BY " U. S. INTELLIGENCE SOURCES," HAS BEEN TRUE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR AND CANNOT BE TAKEN IN ITSELF AS EVIDENCE OF REDUCED VIETNAMESE INVOLVEMENT IN COMBAT OPERATIONS AGAINST THE GKR. ON THE CONTRARY IT INDICATES CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT AS IN THE PAST.

4. MISS FOA CLAIMS THAT " U. S. MILITARY PERSONNEL MANNING THE ' CAMBODIAN COMBAT CONTROL CENTER' IN THE U. S. EMBASSY BEMOAN THE LACK OF ANY ESTABLISHED ' RULES OF ENGAGEMENT' FOR CAMBODIA." THERE IS NO " CAMBODIAN COMBAT CONTROL CENTER" IN THE EMBASSY. THE EMBASSY HAS SERVED AS A CHANNEL FOR FORWARDING KHMER REQUESTS FOR AIR STRIKES TO THE APPROPRIATE ACTION COMMAND. NO OFFICER CONNECTED WITH THIS FUNCTION COULD POSSIBLY BE IGNORANT OF THE FACT THAT THERE ARE PRECISE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT WHICH GOVERN AIR STRIKES HERE AS WELL AS MULTIPLE SAFEGUARDS TO SEE THAT THEY ARE PROPERLY APPLIED.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PHNOM 04131 030122 Z

5. THE EMBASSY HAS INVESTIGATED ALL REPORTS OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES OF B-52 STRIKES AND HAS YET TO FIND AN EYEWITNESS OF A SINGLE INCIDENT MUCH LESS THE " ENORMOUS CIVILIAN TOLL, " MISS FOA REPORTS. THE MISSION' S KHMER LANGUAGE OFFICERS HAVE PERIODICALLY CANVASSED REFUGEES ON THIS

SUBJECT IN PHNOM PENH AND PROVINCIAL CAMPS AND HAVE UNCOVERED NOTHING BEYOND SECOND HAND ACCOUNTS. THEY COULD NOT HAVE MISSED " REFUGEES SWARMING INTO THE CAPITAL FROM TARGET AREAS" OF WHICH MISS FOA SPEAKS. WE HAVE ALSO QUERIED ALL FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERNATIONAL RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS HERE AND HAVE FOUND NONE WITH KNOWLEDGE OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES, CONTRARY TO MISS FOA'S CLAIM.

6. ALTHOUGH THE STATEMENTS MISS FOA ATTRIBUTES TO AMERICAN OFFICIAL SOURCES IN THIS ARTICLE ARE TOO NUMEROUS TO REFUTE INDIVIDUALLY, VIRTUALLY NONE OF THEM COULD HAVE BEEN MADE BY KNOWLEDGEABLE MISSION OFFICERS IN THE CONTEXT GIVEN. THE DEPARTMENT AND INFO ADDRESSEES MAY WISH TO DRAW ON THE MAJOR INSTANCES MENTIONED ABOVE SHOULD DISCUSSIONS ARISE ABOUT THE SYLVANA FOA ARTICLE.  
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